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PROGRAMME PLANNING

Country and intercountry programmes and projects

FIFTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR SAUDI ARABIA

Note by the Administrator

A. Preparatory process

1. The technical cooperation priorities set out in the fifth country programme for Saudi Arabia have been identified through a process of review and assessment of needs. The particular means whereby such needs were identified are as follows: (a) the mid-term review of the country programme, carried out in December 1988; (b) tripartite reviews, monitoring and evaluation missions; (c) the first national workshop on environment and development, which gave an indication of future needs in the environment sector; (d) sector review missions, which also included new themes and dimensions for consideration of the Government. Other consultations have taken place with the major technical ministries and with the responsible United Nations agencies including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

2. The regular meetings of the Resident Representative with the senior government officials, including the government cooperating agency have been most helpful in developing the programme. The UNDP advisory note indicated a number of areas where UNDP assistance could be envisaged.

B. Analytical commentary on the country programme

3. The areas of concentration in the fifth country programme have been closely determined by the content and orientation of the country's Fifth Development Plan. The main themes of the government plan are as follows: stabilization of the economy and balanced regional development; institutional and private sector development; intensification of structural changes; improved quality and efficiency of public services; utilization and development of national human resources, maintaining the welfare and quality of life of Saudi society; and science and technology development. The areas of concentration in the fifth country programme are:

(a) Economic planning and management;

(b) Human resources and social development;

(c) Strengthening of productive sectors;

(d) Development of transport and communication;

(e) Environment and natural resources management.

4. The fifth country programme incorporates many activities which were initiated during the previous cycles. The United Nations technical cooperation programme in Saudi Arabia is diversified and plays an important catalytic role in Saudi Arabia's economic and social development efforts. The United Nations system is providing the necessary management and technical backstopping with a view to enhancing the Government's capacity to manage its development programmes, particularly in the infrastructure sector, which absorbs a considerable portion of the programme. The fifth country programme will also be involved in upstream activities in the field of economic planning and management, providing technical inputs at the policy and management levels in addition to training of national staff. In the productive sectors UNDP has a comparative advantage in certain areas as an enabling environment for private-sector investment, strengthening institutions, training of personnel and establishing standards and quality control. In transport and communications, UNDP cooperation will deal mainly with the establishment of efficient operation and maintenance management systems. In connection with human resources development, training of Saudi nationals will also continue to be carried out in various specialized fields. The objective is to formulate a comprehensive human resources development policy that would assess future supply and demand in terms of employment, skills availability, and educational and technical training capacity. In addition, activities in this areas could relate to developing policies and programmes relating to human development. Finally in the field of environment, although the scope of UNDP involvement has so far been confined to meteorological sciences and some activities related to conservation of land and water, it is expected to increase considerably in the light of needs to implement the Kingdom's environmental action programmes, including in areas affected by the Gulf war.

C. Management of programme implementation

5. The country programme document clearly sets out the proposals for management of programme implementation. Among these are the following:

(a) Formulation. The adoption of comprehensive assessments of technical cooperation needs in each area of concentration will be the first task. In the formulation of the country programme document close attention was given to the clustering of projects into identifiable areas of concentration with common objectives in conformity with the fifth Development Plan (1990-1995). An analysis was undertaken of the linkages between the projects in the various areas of concentration and the objectives and strategies of the Government in the corresponding sections of the Plan;

(b) Implementation. With regard to the different modalities of execution to be used, it is anticipated that almost all projects will be executed by the United Nations agencies. At the same time, national project directors will be involved at the management level. National execution will also be encouraged during the fifth cycle, where appropriate. The programme in Saudi Arabia will be cost-effective, drawing on different sources of technical expertise and combining international personnel with qualified national professionals;

(c) Monitoring. Established monitoring and evaluation procedures will be applied in the course of the fifth cycle to ensure regular reviews of the progress of the programme. These will include periodic progress reports from Project Directors and individual experts, visits to project sites, tripartite reviews, annual programme reviews and where necessary programme audits. A mid-term review of the country programme will be undertaken towards the middle of the cycle;

(d) Coordination arrangements. The Deputy Ministry of Economic and Cultural Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the coordination of external cooperation activities in Saudi Arabia, including those under the United Nations system. The periodic meetings of United Nations system representatives on substantive matters under the Resident Coordinator will continue during the fifth cycle. Saudi Arabia has large Funds-in-Trust programmes which have to be coordinated with UNDP activities. In this respect, enhanced coordination of efforts is taking place particularly at the sectoral level. A good example of these efforts is the coordination between UNDP and ICAO in the civil aviation field, where management and advisory services are provided under a UNDP-assisted project while operational activities are carried out under a Fund-in-Trust agreement.

D. Recommendations

6. The country programme for Saudi Arabia is closely related to the Government's development plan and meets the high-priority needs of the Government. It also highlights the UNDP comparative advantage based on years of technical cooperation experience in the country. In this context it is important to note that Saudi Arabia will be financing almost the entire programme from its own resources.

7. For these reasons, the Administrator recommends that the Governing Council approve the fifth country programme for Saudi Arabia.